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'Investment in people' supports Center for Vocational Reflection

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Rinkers' commitment boosts study away and international education programs

FIVE FURMAN STUDENTS received scholarships this spring to participate in a study away program during May Experience, the university's three-week semester that bridges the end of the academic year and the start of summer school. The students were the first of many who will participate in travel programs thanks to the generosity of Leighan and David Rinker, who recently made a \$1 million commitment to the newly named Rinker Center for Study Away and International Education.

Kailash Khandke, assistant academic dean for study away and international education, says, "We are designating a large part of the funds to support the endowment for study away, and the rest will largely be allotted to need-based scholarships." Khandke adds that he is working to apply a portion of the gift to study and assess the impact of study away programs on students' lives. He also would like to develop more travel opportunities for faculty to cultivate an interest in developing new faculty-led study away programs.

The Rinkers are from Atlantis, Fla., and have been generous Furman supporters for more than 25 years. Leighan Rinker is a current trustee and past chair of the board who holds an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Furman. She and her husband are founding members of the Partners Scholarship Program and have been inducted into Benefactors Circle, a society for donors of more than \$1 million to the university. They also are past members of the Parents Council, as three of their four children (and two of their children's spouses) are Furman graduates. The Marshall E. Rinker, Sr., Foundation, which David chairs, provided the naming gift for Marshall E. and Vera Lea Rinker Hall in the Charles H. Townes Center for Science.

Furman's study away opportunities range from May Experience trips to semester or year-long programs in the United States and abroad, and the university offers opportunities to travel in 37 countries. Approximately 45 percent of students participate in study away programs during their time at the university.

Learn more at furman.edu/academics.

'Investment in people' supports Center for Vocational Reflection

AFTER GRADUATING FROM FURMAN in 1954 and then serving in the Army, John Cothran returned to his Greenville home searching for a calling.

"I had visited the new campus many times on return trips while stationed at Fort Knox and would always pass through the front gates to see the progress," he says. "One day my father [a 1922 graduate] invited me to tag along to see the cornerstone placed for the library. He pointed at a man across the crowd, E. Roy Stone, and said, 'Mr. Stone is a prominent real estate man. Let me introduce you to him; you may want to go into the real estate business.'"

Cothran soon joined Stone in the real estate profession. He opened his own company in 1962, followed by many others, and his career would span more than five decades.

Perhaps it was this memory of finding his calling that inspired Cothran, a longtime Furman trustee, and his wife, Jeanette, to pledge a major gift that, when added to gifts from other donors, will ensure a \$3 million endowment for the Center for Vocational Reflection. "Jeanette and I always wanted to invest in people — it is one investment that never goes down in value," Cothran says.

Established as the Lilly Center in 2001 through a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., the center is now named for the Cothrans. It aims to provide resources for individuals and groups to reflect upon their vocational choices by creating opportunities for thoughtful and open dialogue while seeking to stimulate and inform social action.

The center also sponsors service-learning projects for students and alumni. More than 100 faculty members have benefited from a series of yearlong seminars designed to explore topics that help them better discern their vocations as teachers and scholars. Through the center's alumni programs, endowed by Tom and Becky Hood '89 Becherer, alumni may participate in "pilgrimages" around the world or return to campus for a weekend of reflection and conversation with current and former faculty on the topic, "What's Calling You Now?"

David Bost, professor of Spanish and administrative director of the Cothran Center, says, "We hope to expand the footprint of the center, letting it permeate through other programs and the curriculum. We hope 'Who am I?', 'What do I believe?' and 'What does the world need from me?' will become common themes throughout the university."

The Cothrans are founding members of the Partners Scholarship Program. Two of their four sons are Furman graduates.

Learn more at furmanlilly.com.